

DDS EMPLOYEE NEWS

Governor M. Jodi Rell

Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara

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Best Buddies—2008



(Left to right); Back row, Meghan Sweeney, Nikki Besitko, Best Buddies State Director; Sarah Carroll, Deputy Director of Programs; and Eileen McMurrer, DDS Birth to Three. Seated, Sarah Morocco, Ryan Sweeney and Troy England.

The 2008 Best Buddies Team CT continues to recruit for this year's ***Audi Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port***. Best Buddies is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing friends and jobs for people with intellectual disabilities.

Best Buddies CT recently visited the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Central Office in Hartford to drum up interest in the challenge. Each year, riders from all over the country make the 90-mile Bike-a-thon from the Kennedy Library in Boston, Massachusetts to Hyannis Port on Cape Cod. Last year, Team CT came in fourth in overall dollars raised to support the organization.

Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara along with colleagues Eileen McMurrer, Birth to Three and Fred Balicki, Quality Management, plan to participate in the ride.

"This will be my sixth year riding in the event," said Commissioner O'Meara. "It can be a grueling ride, especially if the weather doesn't cooperate, but I can't tell you how much it means to know that we are helping this amazing program that benefits Connecticut Citizens."

continued on next page

February is Black History Month. "Why Black History?"

As an agency that serves consumers and families from diverse communities, it is important that the Department of Developmental Services' (DDS) staff have knowledge of the populations we serve. Black History Month offers a unique opportunity to begin learning more about African Americans.

The first African slaves arrived in Virginia in 1619. African descendents have since made immeasurable contributions to America. However, despite their important role in the making of America, African Americans were for the most part absent from American history books until the mid 20th century.

We owe the celebration of Black History Month to Dr. Carter G. Woodson. Born to parents who were former slaves, he spent his childhood working in the Kentucky coal mines. He later went on to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard. In pursuing his studies, Mr. Woodson was troubled by the absence of Africans Americans in textbooks.

continued on next page

Department of Developmental Services

www.ct.gov/dds

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Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

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Questions?

West Region Administration Changes

Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara and Deputy Commissioner Kathryn du Pree recently announced changes to the West Region Management Team.

Southbury Training School (STS) Director Fritz Gorst has been serving as Acting West Regional Director for the past several months and will continue to lead the Region through the remainder of this fiscal year.

Mr. Gorst is a seasoned administrator who has successfully directed services at STS for the past eight years. His wealth of experience in both Massachusetts and Connecticut and his existing working relationships make him an excellent candidate for this key leadership position.

Shannon O'Brien has been named Assistant Regional Director for Private Administrative Services for the West Region. Donna Josephson has been named Assistant Regional Director for Quality Improvement, Risk Management and Clinical Services for STS. Ms. Josephson's position is new, bringing a third Assistant Regional Director to STS to strengthen the team as Mr. Gorst assumes his new responsibilities.

Ms. O'Brien has worked for the department for over 20 years in a variety of supervisory and managerial capacities, most recently as Resource Manager for the West Region. Her knowledge about community service delivery, managerial ability and consumer advocacy will enhance the region's relationships with the private sector.

Ms. Josephson, who has a long tenure as part of the STS management team, brings extensive knowledge and expertise in various federally regulated programs, as well as her contributions to the development of quality systems for compliance with the STS Consent Decree.

"We are confident that these appointments will strengthen the administrative leadership and support the current efforts and initiatives in the region," said Commissioner O'Meara.

Best Buddies *continued from previous page*

"The relationship with DDS is extraordinary," said Best Buddies Connecticut State Director Nikki A. Besitko. "Funding and support allow us to continue to enhance our programs by providing friendship opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities."

For more information regarding the race and how you can participate or make a donation can be found on the Best Buddies Website at: www.bestbuddiesct.org.

Black History Month *continued from previous page*

In 1926, after a decade effort by Carter G. Woodson, Negro History Week was established in February, and in 1976 the celebration was expanded to Black History Month. Woodson chose the month of February because it contains the birthdays of two men who greatly influenced the African American population, Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.

Black History Month acknowledges and honors the accomplishments and contributions of African Americans, the famous as well as everyday people who worked toward the realization of free and full participation in the American Dream.

Black History Month also recognizes the unique history and traditions of African Americans, reminding us all of the multicultural origins of our country. It is not only African American History, it is American History.

If you are interested in learning more about African Americans, the Central Office Equal Opportunity Division has a resource library that contains videos and books addressing the African American Experience. If you are interested, please contact the Division at **1-860-418-6022**.